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ABSTRACT

Of 35 prominent Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) from 10 Canadian provinces participating in this study, 31 were interviewed by telephone and 4 in writing. The vast majority of CEO's (82 percent) agreed that they work in an increasingly political environment. Many CEO's perform a "screening function" between community groups and the school system, working to keep community groups away from the school board except as a last resort. In preparing for school board meetings, CEO's want to anticipate questions and avoid surprises, and at the meetings themselves to maintain a low profile. One common problem in working with school board members was pressing too hard for certain issues. While CEO's are expected to be experienced educators, their administrative roles may vary from politician to mediator. Because CEO's have a high profile in developing policy, they have developed a range of strategies for working with both "internal influencers" (such as board members and principals) and "external influencers" (such as parents and the media) in a variety of forums, from board meetings to luncheons. Such strategies include listening to individuals and groups; following policy where it exists; and maintaining rational, cool behavior. (JBM)

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ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN A POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, Mintzberg (1977) noted a progression in the way scholars have viewed organizations from a goal perspective. He noted several steps in the progression:

1) A single actor, an entrepreneur, controlled an organization with one main goal - profit maximization.

2) A single actor, a peak coordinator, sought to reconcile many goals imposed on an organization by influencers. (Papandreou, 1952).

3) A single actor viewed goals only as constraints on an organization, and maximization was not that important. (Simon, 1964).

4) Organizations had multiple goals and multiple actors sought to influence outcomes through coalition formation and bargaining. As Mintzberg put it, "Goals did emerge from the bargaining process, although they were inconsistent overtime, since the needs of different influencers were attended to sequentially." (1977)

5) "Organizations had no goals at all; they were merely political arenas, convenient places where influencers played power games with each other." (Mintzberg, 1977).

Danté Lupini (1982), the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Vancouver School Board, in discussing how CEO's acted as leaders, decried the lack of relevance of "Path-Goal Theory," "Consideration and Initiating Structure" and

"Contingency Theory." Lupini's thesis was that the current political environment of school boards dictated CEO action not described by these early constructs. Lupini discussed the emergence of pressure or interest groups as a 1970's phenomenon; he explained how school boards became "politicized;" that is, how board members came under each others influence, and the influence of community groups. He went on to discuss the "nebulous line between policy and administration." (1982, p.3). Lupini notes:

> Whereas it was previously expected that the educational leader would consult various groups and individuals who were to be affected by a proposed decision prior to making a recommendation to the board, trustees (board members) are now adopting a personal and direct approach, frequently by-passing the (CEO). The job of trustee is shifting from part-time to full-time involvement (p.3).

Mintzberg's and Lupini's observations converge. School boards have become more political bodies. The role of the CEO has shifted, if not undergone major transformation.

The purpose of our present research has been to study how CEO's of school boards define their own effectiveness as they work in a political environment. We were not concerned with the CEO as educational leader or as figurehead at public rituals. Picking up on the thoughts of Mintzberg and Lupini, we focused on how CEO's related to interest and pressure groups, how they functioned vis-a-vis their own boards and board chairmen, and, more particularly, how they defined effective action.

METHODOLOGY

A group of thirty-seven CEO's from across Canada were selected to participate in this study. They were chosen on a combination of three factors: they were active in national education associations; they were reputed, among their colleagues, to be prominent; and, they came from each of Canada's ten provinces. Of the thirty-seven, thirty-five agreed to participate. Thirty-one agreed to a telephone interview while four agreed to write about the topic under study.

We recognized that this approach, of using a non-random small sample, would constrain the external validity of study. Also, we recognized that content analysis conducted by a researcher on interview data might be suspect in terms of internal validity -- "Is this what was said by respondents?" To treat the former issue, study findings would be presented to non-sample CEO's, and their comments and reactions would be sought. To treat the latter issue, findings would be reported to respondents for their comments and reactions. Both of these processes are now in progress and cannot be presented within this report.

The telephone interviews were conducted by one person, based on an appointment. An interview guide was used along with extensive probes. Respondents were encouraged to think about recent events in their own school boards as they composed responses. Interviews lasted a minimum of twenty minutes, but, more typically ran to thirty or forty minutes. In only one instance was there any indication of hesitancy by the respondent to be completely candid. Respondents cited incidents, events and people as they discussed the guide questions. The interviews were transcribed and yielded 103 pages of statements ranging in length from a short "yes or no," to a sentence, to a brief paragraph. Statements were then

grouped by question and through a constant comparison procedure some "order" was sought.

The papers on the theme written by the four CEO's numbered thirty-one typewritten pages.

The study findings were drawn largely from the thirty-one interviews as the four papers strayed widely from the interview guide. A few points developed in the papers worked their way into the findings, however. In the following pages the CEO's comments are summarized, then a conceptual analysis of these remarks will be presented.

FINDINGS

The vast majority of CEO's agreed that they work in a political environment (82%), and that their setting is becoming more political by the year (82%). In the few instances where CEO's disagreed, they commented:

> "There is a lot of solidarity in the school board and confidence in the CEO. The CEO gives direction; that is not to say that school board members are 'puppets'."

Or, one CEO noted:

> "My own board debates issues, depends on the CEO, but is not yet into politics."

Another CEO added:

> "We are in a small district and size is a factor. I'll go to a parents home. If a problem exists 'I step on sparks'."

These dissident remarks come from three CEO's whose school boards were all in rural areas, one a small rural city.

In contrast, the one large city CEO who strongly disagreed with the idea that he worked in an increasingly political environment said:

> "We view the pressures (as) greater today, but the role itself has always been very political."

By and large, then, CEO's view their work as residing in a political environment - the premise of this study was supported. We then turned to the issue of effectiveness. How does a CEO "work effectively in such an environment?" We began with:

> "How do you deal with community members effectively, be they individuals or groups, who come to you with requests or demands for action?"

Community Groups Form

At times, individuals in a community approach a CEO with a personal concern, this is often related to their child. The CEO normally would refer this case to a principal for action or treat it if appropriate, in confidence.

In contrast groups may approach the CEO over specific concerns to them. In recent years, in Canada, such groups have rallied around a number of issues, including: school closures; instruction in second language programs; special education programs; sex education programs; and, student transportation issues. CEO's see such coalitions as "interest groups." They have a specific concern and want to be heard.

CEO's unanimously agree that such groups should be listened to. CEO's should not avoid public requests. In fact, some CEO's practice "preventive medicine." That is, they try to be farsighted and invite parents to participate in issues before policy is developed. This is often done through PTA's. There is always a risk that a "grassroots" group may be formed because PTA's tend not to be representative of all community members. Some CEO's practice "preventive medicine" by keeping a high public profile through membership in community groups and active church participation. Others try to appear in local media, informing the public on current issues, and disseminating school board positions.

At a private meeting with a community interest group, one CEO said:

> "If policy exists, I follow it. If they don't like it then they can (go further);
> If discretion exists, I investigate the issue and tell them I'll get back to them;
> If (their request) is idiotic, I tell them I can't help them."

As this one and many other CEO's indicate, they perform a "screening function" between community groups and the school system. CEO's follow policy where it exists, and pursue direction as need be.

If an interest group has a CEO's support, a number of further routes exist in responding to a group. At this point, many school boards differ in how they treat groups. Their response is usually based in written or implicit administrative policy, written or implicit school board policy and, the size and organization of the school board. Also, certain issues dictate how a group will be handled. In the literature, the CEO's response is referred to as "situational" leadership.

For example, in a small community, one CEO said,

> "We meet (the CEO and community group) immediately, and I involve teachers and principals. I keep open channels of communication."

With larger school boards, where boards work with standing sub-committees, and where many senior administrative officers are in place, "listening to a community group" implies other action.

A CEO, in such a situation, usually tries to treat the group himself or to involve assistants. For example, one CEO often assigns an ACEO (or other administrator) to the group to:

1) Meet with and listen to the group,
2) Give the group relevent information,
3) Give the group an initial opinion based on current policy, or
4) Initiate an investigation on the issue and set another meeting date.

This procedure enables the CEO to be removed from the interest group by one level. Later, the CEO may act as new person to be dealt with if the ACEO has no success. Also, the CEO may be removed from a "charged" situation.

All CEO's see efficacy in treating community groups in a rational, cool way. They attempt to avoid collision on issues.

During the treatment of an issue the CEO and ACEO consult informally with their colleagues, principals and teachers in order to get a better perspective on what is at stake. At times, the community group will be "treated" to lunch or tea in an attempt to build trust.

If the issue is large enough, a Task Force may be created. Such a group would involve all interested parties, gather information, study the issue, and try to develop recommendations. This can be a time consuming and costly process, often delaying a decision for a year or more in the hope of finding a concensus. Note that CEO's prefer to treat issues "rationally" more than "politically," they seek concensus rather than win-lose situations for the parties involved.

Where a large school board exists, rather than forming a task force, the CEO in consultation with the school board chairman, may assign an issue to a board sub-committee for a hearing. Here, the community group is not as likely to be so involved in developing recommendations as they might be on a Task Force, but they are heard.

Note that issue treatment by a Task Force or board sub-committee constitutes a "due process" procedure that permits individuals and groups to be given voice. It is a rational procedure; it takes time; it permits clarification of positions. Also, it screens the CEO and the school board from direct initial involvement.

At the same time the community group is seen as an "interest group" rather than a "pressure group." CEO's seem to make an implicit distinction, here. An interest group seeks rational involvement, whereas a "pressure group" uses more militant tactics. The distinction is usually vague, but perceptible.

Either through the CEO directly, through work with an ACEO, through the efforts of a Task Force, or through work with a school board a resolution of the issue is sought, then recommendations can go to the board, if necessary.

As one CEO said,

> "If the community group gets what they want, then they think we're effective. If they aren't satisfied - who knows what'll happen next."

The Last Resort: The School Board

By and large CEO's try to keep community groups away from school boards; they try to deal with issues themselves, within board policy. At the same time, they keep the board chairman informed - usually on a daily basis - of current events. The guiding point is "NO SURPRISES." Board members may be telephoned by the media and they uniformally insist on being kept informed on sensitive issues.

Some boards have policy that requires administrative treatment of an issue before bringing it to the board. Again, the screening function of the administrator is in place.

If a group gets militant, regardless of prior treatment by school administrators, or the CEO, a board will give the group a hearing. Again, boards have tried to rationalize the treatment of militant groups. This gets played out in a number of ways.

First of all, the pressure group will be given a time slot on the agenda of a public meeting - the group will be given full voice on an issue. However, they may be asked to submit their position in writing prior to the hearing. This serves two purposes for CEO's. First, it forces the pressure group to reach a concensus on their demands. Second, it gives the board a document to work with even if the public meeting becomes chaotic.

Some school boards have a "question and answer" time at their meetings, and pressure groups can have voice at such times. Usually the chairman of the board will either deal with a question directly, or defer it until a complete response can be given. CEO's note that quick, "thin" responses should be avoided in such situations. Chairmen of boards try to be prepared for questions that might come forward as part of their preparation for meetings. Again, the "no surprises" theme emerges.

School boards give a hearing to a group and try to not react impulsively. CEO's recognize that pressure groups often represent only a small proportion of a community. This means that they should be heard and responded to, but not at the expense of higher priorities held by the board. To hinder impulsive action, boards often develop a policy of not acting on a recommendation until a second or even third reading at subsequent meetings. This "due process" is seen as a time delay to insure a wise decision.

A few boards use a trial balloon technique to test community reaction. They announce a new policy to come into effect in a few months and they seek staff and community involvement before acting. Such a procedure is likely to be more effective where there is doubt surrounding community thoughts or values regarding an issue. Again, this is a rational procedure.

CEO's recognize that some issues cannot be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. They may play a mediator role in such a situation and seek concensus, or they may try to get a particular alternative through. More on the CEO's role later.

The school board is the last resort. Whatever procedure is used in trying to work with community groups effectively, the group can have, if it demands, a hearing with the school board.

What Doesn't Work with Community Members?

About 20% of the CEO's insist they work with community members effectively. They argue that "dealing with community groups effectively" means having a "due process policy" in place. Effectiveness is not related to action on an issue. Follow the policy, and deal with groups immediately.

In contrast 80% of the CEO's think they have acted ineffectively at times. They say:

"Sure"

"We screwed it up!"

"The last guy who was perfect was crucified."

Some CEO's linked ineffectiveness in action to their own personal failings. "I overreacted;" "I didn't listen to them;" "I was impatient;" "I was insensitive - I thought I knew better than they did;" and as one CEO put it, "An autocrat was O.K. ten years ago, but not today."

Another major reason for ineffective action stemmed from the CEO's misreading of the community. "I assumed everyone was where I was," after many meetings with the school board, the CEO thinks he has the community's pulse. This may not be the case. In another instance the CEO said, "I didn't assess the differences of opinion across the community - our community is diverse, and I didn't realize it." Also, CEO's have leaned heavily on internal school board reports when those reports did not include community input. Action based on internal reports has led to conflict with community groups. Alternately, the community or community groups have not accepted CEO's "best thinking," and have precipitated crises.

One CEO noted that he delegated an issue to a subordinate, and did not follow up. The subordinate failed, the CEO failed, and the board came in for flak.

Finally, CEO's said they just didn't have policy in place in time on an issue. They hadn't prepared for the crisis in time. Policy was developed in the heat of battle with pressure groups.

Most CEO's recognize that success in working with community groups is a risky process. They need to keep in close touch with community members on sensitive issues, and that "due process" is essential.

Working with School Board Members

We then asked CEO's three questions. How do you work effectively with school board members (a) Outside of meetings, (b) Preparing for meetings, and (c) During meetings? There was some concensus yet a lot of diversity in their responses. Eight themes emerged from the "outside of meetings" question.

Twelve CEO's were concerned with their availability to board members. One commented, "I'm available for informal discussion at any time, giving them information and helping them to decide." Another noted, "I work with board

members who need extra support." Another echoed this viewpoint, "I'm a confident for those who want to talk." Another CEO commented we (senior staff) educate them, and they educate us - we share.

One CEO dissented from this viewpoint. He argued that it was not wise to be available always. "Give the school board member time to think, don't jump too quickly." Another commented, "I have very little to do with board members outside meetings. Individuals may have positions (on issues) different from the total board. "Informal meetings don't help because after a discussion with me they may think they have my support."

In addition, when board members are elected in a "ward system" then CEO's need to be available to treat ward concerns brought by board members.

CEO's distinguished between relating to board members on a business level - being available outside meetings - and on a social level. (the second theme). A wide range of viewpoints are held here. Some CEO's are adament that social relations are out of bounds, they can't be "palsy-walsy" with board members. This can interfere with professional relations. A number of CEO's, in contrast think social ties are acceptable. Some only attend formal functions with board members, while others go to lunch, have a drink and meet over dinner with spouses. These CEO's see close personal ties as "bonding" and building "trust" in their professional ties.

One CEO takes each trustee to lunch on a one-to-one basis annually, also after an election.

Whether they relate socially or not, CEO's are very concerned that they treat school board members equally at the business level. Some see social relations as helpful, while others see more risk than worth in such endeavor.

A third theme that permeates out-of-meeting relations is the CEO-Chairman relationships. CEO's and chairmen work closely together. Some meet daily with each other. The information flow across this dyad appears continuous. One CEO said "My chairman never wants to be 'surprised'." Some of these dyads become very intimate, while others function at a more professional level. It is evident that openness and trust must be elements of the relationship; while not mentioned, a CEO would likely have difficulty in administering a board if this relationship broke down. In most boards, it appears that the CEO-Chairman dyad is the funnel between the board and the school system. Furthermore, because most boards are "screened" from the public without a prior hearing with the CEO, the CEO also funnels most community issues to the board.

An unwritten rule in some boards, and an explicit rule in one case, states that board members will not issue statements to the media without checking with the CEO first.

Five other themes were mentioned briefly regarding working with board members outside meetings. Five CEO's noted that they must be open, honest, and not beat-around-the-bush with board members. Two CEO's commented that they make themselves available to board members before public meetings in case of questions, and that they may make comments to board members after meetings if they felt public comments were not in order. One CEO insures that board members have office space near him to insure informal discussion. Finally, with boards that operate with Standing Committees, the CEO usually assigns an administrator to work with each committee to insure two-way communication. A few CEO's encourage board members to sit in on administrative meetings, as observers, to get the pulse of the day-to-day action.

It is clear that many variations exist in the minds of CEO's on how to work effectively with board members out-of-meetings. Personal style, tradition within a board, size of the board, and the way the board organizes it's work seem to dictate a given effective pattern of operation.

Preparing for School Board Meetings

Most school boards develop a calendar of regularly scheduled meetings and advertise them widely.

The agenda for meetings is the product of a meeting by the CEO and board chairman; at times one or two administrators are involved in setting the agenda. Where a board standing committee system is in place, sub-committee chairmen bring agenda items to the chairman/CEO for the agenda. The agenda is a vital document for a board chairman, as it structures the meeting he or she chairs. This "agenda meeting" often lasts a few hours or even an entire day, as the chairman is brought up-to-date on every agenda issue. Again, the "no surprises" theme emerges.

One CEO stated, "Nothing gets on the agenda without back-up material for all board members." All boards disseminate the agenda and back up materials a few days before a meeting; four days in advance is typical. Some boards require that all reports require recommendations. "We want to know where the CEO stands!" Two CEO's want reports in early so they can be studied and edited prior to presentation, "We want to put our best foot forward." As one CEO put it, "Good reports are short, to the point, and free of educational jargon. If we have to rework a report after the board has seen it, we are in trouble."

In preparing for meetings, CEO's and chairmen want to anticipate community questions on issues and be prepared - no surprises. This often involves a lot of telephoning and informal meetings prior to full board meetings. Administrators often are contacted before meetings on salient issues, and they are often available at board meetings ready to be called on.

An interest group on an agenda is a "hot" item. Chairmen and CEO's think they must be very well prepared for such agenda items. One board insists that before it will hear an interest group, the group must submit a report to the CEO. This gives the CEO time to prepare a response to the report (the interest group report is never altered).

CEO's and board chairmen prepare for formal board meetings in much the same way across Canada.

At School Board Meetings

CEO's agree on how to be effective at school board meetings. They see public school board meetings as belonging to the school board. The meetings are formal and adhere to the agenda. CEO's studiously avoid any behaviour that would indicate the board is a "rubber stamp" for the administration. The chairman is in total control; school board members are responsible for their own actions, even to the extent of disciplining each other.

The CEO should keep a low profile. He usually sits next to the chairman; this aids in passing notes back and forth. The CEO rarely speaks unless spoken to and then he answers directly or involves another administrator present, or he delays his response to another meeting. He would speak to help get the board out of a muddle, clarify an issue by giving information, "stroke" a board member for exemplary

action, or to get a board member out of an embarrassing situation - but that's about all. He would never "put a board member out on a limb" in public. The CEO tries to be supportive of the chairman. In short, his role is an advisory one. As one CEO said, "our work is done before the meeting begins."

As the meeting progresses, board members work on motions. The CEO remains quiet. If a pressure group has the floor on an issue the CEO has to be careful in responding because he does not want to appear to be "leading the board." If difficulty arises on an issue, the CEO may seek a delay to the next meeting so he has time to investigate and report to the board.

Interestingly, when the school board goes to a private (committee of the whole, or, in camera) session, the role of the CEO changes markedly. Here, he speaks more pointedly, comments more extensively on issues, and attempts to direct the board "in the best interests" of either the children or the system. In private sessions, his role is more dominant; CEO's say board members expect this of them!

Why are CEO's Not Effective in Working with School Board Members?

There were a number of points raised by CEO's when they considered how they had not been effective in working with school boards.

While CEO's expect to disagree with school board members some times, some common problems emerged. For example, after an election a new board member may come in on a particular platform and play Don Quixote until he or she is tamed by board members. Or, a new trustee would not know board procedures, and have to be led through a "training period." At times, a CEO may have a deep seated philosophically different orientation to education than a trustee, and this

would surface over the years on particular issues. "All I try to do is be professional or ignore them - not be personal. But, when I don't ignore them and (I) confront them, the situation becomes worse." A few CEO's implied, though no one explicitly stated, there are school board members and school board members. Some are well prepared to assume responsibility as one member of a board while others are not. In short, conflicts among board members occur and CEO's think they are generally ineffective in handling such cases.

CEO's recognize their own long experience as a potential problem. One CEO said, "I'm impatient. How stupid can they be! I came on too strongly. I'm too directive, and this stiffles debate."

Also, CEO's recognize that they can lobby too hard for their point of view, and this can yield problems.

Long experience with a community and board also can lead to taking them for granted and losing a "fine edge" in the CEO-Board professional relationship. This can lead to treating an issue as routine when a community sees it differently.

A number of other points of ineffectiveness were raised including:

1) "Always give a straight answer." "Don't skate around on an issue."

2) "Keep the administration of policy out of the board's hands." One board has a policy that a board member can't go to a school without the CEO's approval.

3) "Don't lose your cool - ever."

4) "Avoid buddy-buddy relationships with board members."

5) "Devote as much time and energy to an issue as required."

Two CEO's commented on the success they had in going on a retreat with board members. Each could lay out their concerns in private. "It gave us all an

opportunity to dialogue on things we didn't deal with before." Senior administrators were present at one of these sessions, as well as the CEO.

What do Board Members Expect of the CEO?

Five CEO's, in response to this question, opened with remarks including, "Be God!" "Too much," and "One hell of a lot!" It was clear that boards ask a lot - in terms of time, energy, and commitment from CEO's. All of this was said in a joking way.

On the serious side, one CEO said, "Give good advice and keep them out of trouble." Another said, "I've got to find solutions to problems. To keep up-to-date. To give straight, honest information." "The bottom line is that I'm an educator and I have to take care of the children first."

In addition the school boards expect CEO's to execute and monitor board policy in a fair, efficient way.

Also CEO's are expected to be visible in the community, and to represent the board at many functions both as a figurehead and as a spokesman. In a way, this is a public relations role.

CEO's seem to see themselves closely allied to boards in a professional relationship. They are responsible for bringing to the board the educators' perspective on what is best for children. By and large, CEO's are experienced educators; the tone of their collective voices (on the taped interviews) exudes both experience and confidence. Board members probably expect this, too.

Community Expectations for the CEO

Some CEO's said very few community members hold expectations for me, "They don't know who the heck I am." "The Community is more concerned with the

principal of the school; I'm judged by the way their childrens' school is run."

In contrast, most CEO's thought their communities did hold expectations for them. At the personal level, they had to be "honest, credible and available to listen." One CEO reported arranging his office with tables and chairs - getting rid of his desk - to promote the appearance of availability and openness. Also community members expected CEO's to "lead a clean life, and to stand for something."

In terms of their work many CEO's thought community members wanted them to "lead a good quality educational system," and "to be up-to-date in programs."

Other CEO's noted their public relations work role. They had to represent the system to the media, join community groups, and speak when invited to community affairs. This latter task was important for one CEO, because most community members didn't have children in school and he saw his task as winning their votes on budget referenda.

Finally, some CEO's thought community groups expected them to be available and to help them achieve their ends rather than be an obstacle. However, these CEO's saw themselves as "not playing favorites" - particularly at school board meetings. "Some groups think I'm more powerful in the system than I am; they think I run the board," one CEO reported. "It isn't so."

The CEO as Mediator or Politician

We then asked CEO's

> "Do you think it best for you as a CEO to be a 'mediator' between parties on issues, or a 'politician' who tries to do what you think is important?"

For many CEO's this was a difficult question to answer. Many paused before answering, one said the question wasn't fair - he may be right. However, CEO's

split themselves into three camps. One group thought they should take sides, the political role, another group thought they should be mediators, while a third group thought they should be "Men for all seasons."

The CEO as Politician. "I have to be a politician more than a mediator; as a mediator I have no input into the system,... (I) must want the system to have direction." Another CEO was quite candid, "I've gone full circle in the last 10 years. The educational-political environment will not accept what the CEO thinks is right. (You have to) understand both sides, chose a position you can live with and sell it to the other side." The same CEO added, "You have to respond to pressure groups and yet keep your own faith; you need to find a way." Another CEO commented, "You use whatever approach is necessary to do what is best for the system. I sell, I convince on the best solution; some compromise is necessary." Finally, one CEO put it this way, "The bottom line is what I feel is right - what I have to stand up for." CEO's who play the political role clearly see their values as playing a part in school board decisions.

The CEO as Mediator. "My job is to build teams - among senior people, with principals and teachers. The school board expects me to manage the system well." This CEO went on to note internal conflict often developed in the system and his task was to keep everyone together.

Two CEO's expressed a personal dislike for the political role. As one put it, "I'm not a good politician,...(I) try to use a problem-solving approach in a pluralistic environment, then impose my values, particularly on a controversial issue. As an aside, some might argue that this practice was more political than not.

Another CEO noted that there is need for compromise in the public domain and it was his role to insure it. It is the "school board that is political, and I must represent the best interests of our children to them - as an educator."

CEO's who emphasize the mediator role see "due process," team building among staff members, and community involvement in decisions as important.

The CEO as Man for All Seasons. One CEO said "It depends on the situation, at times I mediate (most situations), and at times I'm a politician (a few situations). As a mediator I seek common ground, as a politician I win some and lose some."

Another CEO noted, "If the issue is not important to me, I'll try mediation, if it is important, then I'll try to get it done my way." A second said, "If the issue is near and dear to me I'll be political."

One CEO noted that mediation helps keep the peace, and that it is a more "professional" way to approach issues.

Finally, one CEO said "I don't like the either/or question. I'm a mediator at all times, but I'm pragmatic. School board members don't want me to be a small 'p' politician, yet I have to be very astute to resolve conflicts. Success often depends on how well you've treated people before the conflict."

These CEO's seem to manipulate their actions based on how they see the situation.

CEO's are divided on how best to act effectively. While concensus exists among them on the political nature of their environment, they disagree on how to respond to it.

The Role of the CEO in Policy Development and Implementation

While a school board is developing policy, the CEO or his delegate has a high profile. He presents information and reports, and sets out alternatives. He makes recommendations on issues. He argues positions. One CEO noted, "the school board members are 'policy makers,' I'm there to help them." Another CEO commented that he "only related to the school board on policy development."

The CEO's can play the political or mediation role during policy development because policy development, leading to a recommendation to the board, occurs in private meetings. Once a recommendation is before a board in a public meeting, the CEO plays a back seat role. "School boards do not want to, nor appear to want to be rubber stamps of the administration."

Once policy is set, CEO's almost unanimously agree that they must carry it out with full vigor.

Yet, as one CEO noted, "you lead with the consent of the led," implying that those effected by decisions should have input early on in policy development.

Also, a number of CEO's noted that they take new policy through two or three readings prior to passage to give time for interested parties to make presentations to the school board.

A few CEO's noted that school board administrators should stay out of policy implementation, while one CEO thought that board members might be helpful on implementation, if their efforts were channelled through his office. Also, with more "full-time" board members, CEO's see board member involvement in policy administration as inevitable.

ANALYSIS

CEO's function in a political environment where influence is at the core of activity. The present study, based on interview data has uncovered one major aspect of how influence is treated by CEO's -- through specific strategies. In a sense, a CEO attempts to manage the influence (or political) process. He seeks ways and means of reaching policy decisions that will satisfy most key influencers. This work requires time and energy; tenacity may be at the core of leadership in a political environment.

Long (1982) has noted that, "interests and influence, political resources, and strategies are among the most fundamental (concepts) in any examination of the politics of policy making." This analysis focuses on the strategies used by CEO's. It should also be noted that CEO's remain as non-influencers and exclusively as managers of the political situation at times, and at other times they too become influencers. Here, they attempt to shape policy in particular ways and use their political resources. Personal style probably dictates the CEO's orientation -- politician or mediator -- on issues, along with the perceived salience of possible outcomes for education in his board.

Politics can be defined as acts of influence (Banfield, 1961), and a political environment would, therefore, be a setting where actors and groups seek to influence each other on a series of issues over a period of time. Key actors and groups in this political environment typically are:

INTERNAL INFLUENCERS

- Individual School Board Members
- Coalitions of Board Members
- Senior Administrator(s)
- Principal(s)
- Teacher(s)
- School Staffs

EXTERNAL INFLUENCERS

- Parent(s)
- Non-parent Community Member(s)
- Interest/Pressure Groups
- Unions/Associations of Employees
- The Media
- The Ministry of Education

FORUMS WHERE POLITICS ARE PLAYED OUT

- School Board Meetings (public and private sessions)
- School Board Sub-committee Meetings
- Task Force Meetings (public and private)
- Caucuses
- Luncheons
- PTA Meetings

In short, CEO's witness and report influence being wielded in diverse settings by various actors and groups on a wide range of issues.

Moreover, CEO's have developed strategies for working in this political environment and they have linked administrative effectiveness to the use of these strategies. The strategies relate to CEO-Community relations and CEO-Board relations.

CEO-Community Strategies

In working with both internal and external influencers, CEO's have developed common political practices. These practices vary slightly from board to board, from community to community and from issue to issue. They include:

1) Listening to individuals and groups

2) Following policy where it exists

3) Conducting investigations where policy does not exist. Investigations include the use of:

   A. Self study of the issue

   B. Appointing a subordinate to study the issue

   C. Assigning the issue to a school board sub-committee

   D. Creating a task force to study the issue.

4) Practicing "preventative maintenance"

5) Performing a "screening function"

6) Following "due process" in the conduct of investigations

7) Maintaining rational, cool leadership behaviour

8) Becoming an influencer and using resources to influence decisions on salient issues.

First of all, being available to community members and groups is a must. CEO's report a major source of ineffectiveness in a political environment stemming from not listening to a group, or from not recognizing the position of their community on an issue. A consequence of ignoring or misinterpreting the community can initially be unrest and finally the formation of a grassroots pressure group to fight the board. In responding to community groups, CEO's are governed by established board policy, and, as such, the CEO is less an entrepreneur and more an interpreter of established policy.

However, where policy does not exist then CEO's seem ready to conduct investigations to see if policy is necessary. Investigations, in themselves, are "strategies." The procedures used in defining an investigation give differential power to internal and external influencers. In addition, the investigation strategy legitimates policy development. Also, the investigation strategy can provide sufficient time delay to reach broadly based decision.

An investigation strategy can be as simple as self-study by the CEO on an issue or as elaborate as the creation of a Task Force to report and make recommendations to the board. The former can take a week, the latter, a year or two. Where there is no evident concensus on a major educational issue among school board members, the CEO, and community groups, a quick study and recommendation announced by the CEO can cause chaos. In contrast, if the CEO announces an investigation strategy that involves concerned parties, there is stronger likelihood that rationality will prevail, risk diminished, and concensus found. Effective CEO's seem to understand the need for such a wide range of strategies.

Another strategy used by CEO's can be termed "preventative maintenance." At the manifest level, it includes all those activities performed by the CEO used to keep in touch with the internal and external influencers. On the one hand, preventative maintenance has a monitoring function -- gathering information. On the other hand, it has a disseminating function -- giving information. At times, "preventative maintenance" has an influencing function as a CEO attempts to bring around a person or group to a particular viewpoint. At a latent level, the dress, manner and tone of voice of a CEO are designed to breed confidence in the person and office, the board, and the community's education system. "Preventative maintenance" is practiced at and before school board meetings, high school

graduations, Rotary Club meetings, church suppers, TGIF meetings, school cafeteria lunches, and at other places and times. Kissing babies is not reported by CEO's, but recognizing students by name is mentioned. Without extensive preventative maintenance, the CEO is isolated from key influencers. Preventative maintenance is maintenance of the political system.

Another strategy reported by CEO's can be termed the "screening function." That is, the CEO keeps issues from the school board (and the board from issues) until the board is prepared to treat them. School boards do not want to be "surprised" on an issue by not having up-to-date relevent information, they don't want to be "surprised" by a community group in a public arena, nor do they want to be "surprised" by the media who seek a story. "Surprise" is removed by the CEO as he acts as a communication funnel to and from the board.

The screening function is imbedded in a larger strategy termed "due process." That is, there is policy (be it written or unwritten) used to guide a CEO in treating issues. Due process implies a series of steps, for example, the formation of task forces or use of board committees, along with a time line to insure that information is gathered and influencers are given voice. The effective CEO defines the due process strategy for the board on an issue. The strategy may evolve over time in order to treat key influencers. Due process contributes to a rational decision climate even when conflict over an issue exists.

In the due process treatment of an issue CEO's see efficacy in maintaining a detached, cool, leadership style. However, if for any reason a CEO has a decided interest in one alternative course of action over another, then the CEO is likely to become an "influencer" in the proceedings. The CEO's influence will be wielded behind the scenes with the school board, and may be used to

funnel "educationally slanted" reports to the school board. That is, the CEO's position will be declared, and usually supported by an appeal to "what is best for children." At a school board public meeting, however, the CEO will yield to the will of the board. As Lupini and others have noted, you have to fight for what you think is right, and you have to be prepared to go along with board decisions even if they are at variance with what you know is best; otherwise, there is only one other course of action.

CEO - Board Relations

CEO's think they must be available to board members to treat their concerns and questions. The CEO-Board Chairperson relationship is more extensive and intense than the relationship with other board members; daily contact either in person or on the telephone is reported by many CEO's. However, a distinction is made by CEO's between their professional and their social relations with board members. CEO's agree that a professional relationship is at the heart of effective school administration. In addition, some CEO's support an "informal social" relationship with board members, some support a "formal social" relationship, while others avoid social interaction. In the informal relationships, board members, usually only some on a board, are treated as family friends, whereas in the formal relationship contacts are confined to events where all board members would be invited. Some CEO's report risk in informal social ties, they perceive a link between close social relations and favouritism in the professional relationship. In the final analysis, the personal style of the CEO is likely to dictate social ties. Also, it is understandable, as CEO's report, that after working closely together on critical issues they would have close ties with some board members.

Where large school boards exist, and where boards have large central offices, CEO's often rely on their assistants to meet with board subcommittees or ad hoc committees in their place. This provides the board and CEO with a network of influencers on policy development as well as a wealth of specialized knowledge

In preparing for school board meetings, CEO's and chairmen rely on agendas, supplementary documents, subcommittee, task force and interest group reports, not to mention internally produced administration reports. These devices add rationality to an often turbulent political environment, and, therefore, represent strategic devices used to influence outcomes. It is before public school board meetings when the CEO must be active in influencing board decisions. With large boards, say 19 members a majority is 11, while with small boards, say 7 a majority is 4. Much more time must be devoted to influencing large boards than small ones.

Once a board meeting is underway, the role of the CEO is diminished. It is now the politics of the board that is at work. Effective CEO's play a hands-off role in board policy decision making in the public forum. No longer can the CEO screen the board. Through a multiple reading procedure on new policy the board can insure that it does not act in haste, however.

CONCLUSION

CEO's of school boards, from their perspective, live in a political environment. They act as managers of established policy and manager-mediators in the political process, and at times, as influencers (politicians). As managers of the political process, administrative effectiveness is linked to a series of strategies including insuring that a "due process" procedure is followed in the treatment of an issue, that interested parties are heard, that an issue receives fair study, and that consensus is reached, if possible. As politicians, CEO's seek specific outcomes regardless of differing viewpoints. They hinge their course of action on what is best for children or the educational system.

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